

## **Parent Information Network**

### **Transition Information Sheets**

#### **Transition Point 1: Early Intervention Services to Preschool Special Needs**

##### **Transition: The Next Step**

Transition is movement or change without interruption. It should be a smooth flow from one place or condition to another. While the transition plan for a student receiving special education services is designed to prepare him or her for life after high school, transition can start when a child enters preschool, which is the first of six distinct stages or transition points.

##### **Factors of Change**

As a child with disabilities nears his/her third birthday, this is the time to determine if the child is eligible to receive preschool special education services from the local school district. Eligible children make the transition upon reaching three or at other agreed upon entrance times according to the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

If your child has been receiving services through the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP), you will have an opportunity to attend a transition conference with school district personnel. Either you or the AzEIP service coordinator may make the arrangements for this conference. It will generally be held some time between the time your child is 2 years 6 months and 2 years 9 months old.

Parents of a child who has not previously been identified as needing early intervention services will need to contact the principal of their neighborhood school or the special education director of the school district in which they live. The same is true for families who have recently moved to Arizona.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, §300.121(c), states: a free appropriate public (FAPE) needs to begin "...no later than the child's third birthday..." and that an IEP or an IFSP "...is in effect for the child by that date..." If a child's third birthday occurs during the summer, the child's IEP team shall determine the date when services under the IEP or IFSP will begin.

All school districts have preschool screening available upon request or during a Child Find event. Screening is a district's effort to find all children, ages 3 to non-Kindergarten eligible five-year olds, who may have a disability. Children who are found to have a disability during the screening process may then be referred for additional testing after the parent's consent is given.

A child who enters the preschool setting as a student with a disability will need to qualify

for special education services based on the results of tests and information gathered in seven areas: vision, hearing, cognitive development, physical development, communication development, adaptive development, and social and emotional development. A preschooler with special needs must meet criteria for one of the following special education classifications: Preschool Moderate Delay, Preschool Severe Delay, Preschool Speech/Language Delay, Hearing Impaired, or Visually Impaired.

Should the results of the developmental information provided by parents and the comprehensive testing indicate the child is eligible for special education services, an IEP will then be written. The IEP will contain the details of the preschool services needed for the child and the types of services to be provided.

The change from family centered services to services which focus on the child may be the greatest adjustment for both you and your child. The setting for service delivery moves from the home or a therapy-based center to a more formal school setting with an emphasis on educational needs.

### **Ages and Stages: The Toddler Turned Preschooler**

A preschool child is defined as one ". . . who is at least three years of age but has not reached the required age for kindergarten... " (five by September 1), according to Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761 (22).

Each child with a preschool delay has a unique combination of abilities and disabilities. Skills that most children acquire in the first five years of life may need to be specially taught to children with a combination of deficits. Some preschoolers with disabilities require preschool special needs services which help improve thinking, language, movement, self-help, play, and social skills, which are important for development of a preschool child's potential.

### **Making the Transition Smoother**

Transition from early intervention services to preschool services may be easier if you are aware: 1) of the change in types of services, from the medical model to the education model; 2) that services will need to be based on an *educational need* rather than a *therapeutic need*; and 3) that the use of classifications or labels for the child will be common place. You may need to learn new special education terms. There will be less contact with you since the focus will be on the child who is now a student. You may need to learn to request more explanations since a case manager, as you have known one, will generally not be provided by the school to fill that role.

Meetings with school staff and visits by you and your child to the proposed school site may be of benefit. Perhaps introduction of your child to just a few students at a time, over several days, will be helpful. Meeting other parents and sharing concerns may help relieve some anxiety. Finding an organization or class to learn more about your child's needs may also be useful.

### **References**

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, Parent Information Network. (2002). Information Sheet: *Preschool delays: Moderate, severe, and speech/language*. Phoenix, AZ.

Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona Early Intervention Program. (1995). *Seven steps for obtaining special education services*. Phoenix, AZ.

### **Books**

American Foundation for the Blind. (1999). *Essential elements in early intervention: Visual impairment and multiple disabilities*. New York, NY: Author.

Miller, N.B. & Sammons, C. C. (1999). *Everybody's different: Understanding and changing our reactions to disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (1997). *Parenting a child with special needs: A guide to reading and resources*. (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Saunders, K. (2000). *Happy ever afters: A storybook guide to teaching children about disability*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

### **Organizations**

Arizona Children's Information Center, 411 N. 24th St., Phoenix, AZ 85008, 602-364-1400 or 800-232-1676

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities, 1789 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-0419, [www.de.state.az.us](http://www.de.state.az.us)

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007

Parent Information Network, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558,

[www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals/](http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals/)

Preschool Special Needs, 602-364-4011 or 800-352-4558, [www.ade.az.gov/ess/](http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/)

Arizona Department of Health Services, Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs, 2927 N. 35th Ave., Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85017, 602-542-1860, [www.hs.state.az.us/phs/ocshcn/index.htm](http://www.hs.state.az.us/phs/ocshcn/index.htm)

Council for Exceptional Children, Early Childhood Division, 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704, 888-232-7733, [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

Easter Seal Society of Arizona

903 E. 2nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85004-1998, 602-252-6061 or 800-626-6061,

[www.easter-seals.org](http://www.easter-seals.org)

5740 E. 22nd St., Tucson, AZ 85711, 520-745-5222, [www.azseals.org](http://www.azseals.org)

661 E. 32nd St., Ste. A9, Yuma, AZ 85365, 928-726-6800, [www.azseals.org](http://www.azseals.org)

Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital, 1919 E. Thomas Road, Phoenix, AZ 85016, 602-546-1400, [www.phoenixchildrens.com/about/services/emilycenter/index.html](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com/about/services/emilycenter/index.html)

NICHCY (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities), P.O. Box 1492, Washington, D.C. 20013-1492, 800-695-0285, [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

PACER Center, Inc. 8161 Normandale Blvd., Bloomington, MN 55437-1044, 952-838-9000, [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150, [www.pilotparents.org](http://www.pilotparents.org)

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central Ave., Ste. 200, Phoenix. AZ 85004, 602-242-4306 or 800-237-3007, [www.raisingpecialkids.org](http://www.raisingpecialkids.org)

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